

will need to make an extraordinary effort in the coming months and years to secure their future. But we have been giving them the necessary tools to do so. Let's not forget when the President signed the Defense authorization bill into law last year, again, those words: This should be the year of transition.

We have given the Iraqis the necessary tools. Now it is up to them. The sage words of Benjamin Franklin, following the success of the 1787 Constitutional Convention come to mind in thinking about Iraq at this moment in history. When Franklin was approached by a Mrs. Powell of Philadelphia on the streets of Philadelphia and said to him: What have you given us?—Ben Franklin said to that woman: Mrs. Powell, we have given you "a republic, if you can keep it." The Iraqi people are asking a similar question of us: What have we given them? We have given them a republic, if they can keep it. But it is up to them to keep it.

I urge the adoption of the Levin amendment. It puts us on the right road for success.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the terrorists have had a very difficult almost 5 years since 9/11. That was clearly the high-water mark, their attack on America, the killing of over 3,000 people.

Ever since that day, they have been on defense because the President, with widespread support in the Congress, decided to go on offense. And for the last 4½ years, we have been killing terrorists, capturing terrorists. Many are hiding in their caves. We have liberated 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq. The number of rogue regimes, which numbered four when President Bush took office—at that time there was Libya, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—is now down to two. Libya and Iraq no longer threaten their neighbors. The terrorists have had a very difficult 5 years.

Now, the President made it clear at the beginning of this war—and we all agreed—that there was not going to be a sort of clear end date. I have heard this conflict compared, by many of our colleagues, to the length of time in Korea or the length of time in World War II. It seems to me those comparisons are not apt. They do not apply to the current war in which we are engaged.

No one predicts a kind of ticker-tape parade at the end of this conflict. We are dealing with international gangsters who move across borders, who are adept at using the Internet and other modern means of communication.

The best way, then, to measure success in the war on terrorism is this: Have we been attacked again here at home since 9/11? While none of us would confidently predict that will never happen again, it is truly remarkable that we have not been attacked again since

9/11. I wonder why that is. Just good luck? A quirk of fate? Or good policy? It is no accident we have not been attacked again since 9/11. We have been on offense going after the terrorists where they are so they have to confine their mischief to their territory and not here.

So it is a statement of the obvious that they want us out of Iraq. They saw what happened in Beirut in the 1980s. They saw what happened in Somalia in the 1990s. In fact, they are anticipating it, and we have their own words. We have their own words. Ayman al-Zawahiri, No. 2 to Osama bin Laden, in a message to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi killed 2 weeks ago in Iraq—last year intercepted by us—this is what al-Zawahiri had said to say: The Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals . . . The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq. . . . The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority . . . in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exit and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void. . . . The third stage: Extend the Jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq . . . the mujahedin must not have their mission end with the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq . . . their ongoing mission is to establish an Islamic state, and defend it, and for every generation to hand over the banner to the one after it until the Hour of Resurrection. . . . The Americans will exit soon, God willing.

We do not have to guess about what their goals are. They have been quite clear about it—quite clear about it.

So here we are debating which kind of exit date, which kind of announcement of imminent departure we are going to send in a message to them.

Our good friend from Massachusetts, the junior Senator from Massachusetts, has had no less than four different plans over the last 12 months or so. The first plan of the Senator from Massachusetts was to withdraw 20,000 troops by the end of 2005 and the bulk of troops out by the end of 2006. That was Senator KERRY's first plan.

Senator KERRY's second plan: to withdraw if the Iraq Government was not finalized by May 15 of this year. The third plan of the Senator from Massachusetts, which we had an opportunity to vote on last week, was to have all the troops out by the end of this year. Fortunately, only six Senators—six—voted to have all the troops out by the end of this year.

And tomorrow we will have Senator KERRY's fourth plan, which is to have the withdrawal consummated by July 1 of next year—about a year from now.

So four different plans—a kind of floating withdrawal date. But the one thing all the plans have in common is they send a message to the other side that if you can hang on until a date certain, we are on the way out.

We heard the distinguished Senator from Oregon mention earlier he had

not been able to find a single time in history in which setting a specific time for withdrawal produced a positive result.

One thing we know for sure, if they drive us out of Iraq, they will soon be back here. If they drive us out of Iraq, they will soon be back here. And they have already demonstrated they had the capacity, the intelligence, to carry out catastrophic attacks on us here at home.

We all regret and have great anguish over the death of every single American soldier. And it is a fact that we have lost 2,500 of our finest in this war. We revere human life, unlike the gangsters in Baghdad who mutilated two of our soldiers in the last couple of days.

But it is noteworthy that in liberating 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have lost fewer soldiers than we had Americans killed in one day on 9/11, 2001, and fewer soldiers than we lost in Normandy on one day in World War II.

We hurt with every loss, but the losses have been quite minimal given the enormity of the task. And the job, of course, has not been completed. We have to keep on offense, keep after the terrorists, or they will be back here.

So I think this is an extremely important debate. I am glad the Senate is having it. We have sort of different versions of what kind of notice we are going to give to the enemy—that we are either on the way out by a certain day or beginning to pack up to go next door or pack up to go somewhere else by a certain time.

All of those are not good messages for our own troops, who are involved in trying to win the conflict, not a good message to the new Iraqi Government, which is trying to establish itself and get control of Baghdad, and the worst possible news to every terrorist anywhere in the world, just aching for an American defeat, after almost 5 years of a tough situation for them, because they know a lot of their colleagues are dead, they know some of their colleagues are at Guantanamo, they know a bunch of their colleagues are hiding in caves, and they know all the rest of their colleagues are occupied on their turf and not on ours.

They would love to get back on offense. They would love to come back over here and kill Americans right here at home. But as long as we are forward deployed, as long as we are taking out the terrorists where they are, we are winning the war on terror. But we need to keep reminding ourselves what the war was about. It was about protecting us here at home. And so far, I would have to say the policy has been extraordinarily successful.

This is a great debate. We are going to hear from a number of our colleagues over the next day or so. When we finally have votes on both the Levin amendment and the Kerry amendment, I hope they will be defeated, and it will be made clear to the terrorists, once again, that we do not intend to send